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ABSTRACT

Defining rural youth as the 14-25 age group (literate or illiterate and employed or unemployed) and as residents of localities with less than 5,000 people, this paper addresses Ghanaian rural youth and its relationship to: the total population; youth policy and organizations; rural-urban differences; and societal improvements. Major points of discussion include: (1) Ghana's young and growing population (in 1970, 63.9% of Ghana's population was under 25 years of age, a phenomenon that is creating serious economic and employment problems); (2) Ghana's youth policy (while there is no comprehensive youth policy, the urban oriented National Youth Council constitutes the central controlling body for youth affairs in Ghana and includes over 20 national organizations); (3) rural-urban differentials (while Ghana is predominantly rural with 71.1% of the population living in rural areas on 80% of the land, the distribution of doctors, dentists, and other social services favor urban areas and the death rate is higher and the life expectancy rate lower in rural areas); (4) problems of rural youth (organization, education, employment, and migration); (5) conclusions (Ghana's rural youth have been: neglected by the youth organizations; subjected to the insecurity of poverty, disease, and poor living conditions; victimized by inferior educational measures; and alienated by urban oriented decisions and decision makers). (JC)

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THE GHANAIAN RURAL YOUTH: HUMAN RESOURCE OR HUMAN BURDEN

by

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THE GHANAIAN RURAL YOUTH: HUMAN RESOURCE OR HUMAN BURDEN

by

C.K. Brown*

Introduction

It cannot be denied that a country's stock of human capital, both actual and potential, is an important factor in its socio-economic development. Indeed many policies for action and development plans have failed partly because the planners either failed to realize the importance of the existing and potential human resources or did not utilize the available human resources in an efficient manner.

It goes without saying that in every human society there are two types of human capital, namely:- the actual (made up of the adult members of the community) and the potential (made up of children and the youth). It is the extent to which both groups are utilized in the national development effort which determines the state of the human capital in that country. It has also been said that the future belongs to the nations who make the most of the potentials of all of their youth. This is because the youth of today are said to have better health; they are developing intellectually much earlier than any preceding generation; their level of education is generally better than that of their parents, and they are less attached to traditional methods and hence it is easier for them to pioneer changes. All these attributes have made some people regard the youth as 'our nation's finest resource' and 'our last best hope of peace on earth'. Indeed all over the world today, there is greater awareness as to the role the youth can play in national development. Perhaps, this has been due to the increasing realization that young people constitute a large percentage of the population of many countries and of the world as a whole, and that this percentage will continue to grow as the young people reach the age of marriage and begin to have their own children.

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Secondly, the increasing call for greater involvement of the youth in national development might be due to the realization that the needs of the youth are so related to those of other groups in the population that it is difficult to think of dealing with their special problems apart from their relationship with services for other sectors of the population. In effect, the youth and development are seen to constitute two aspects of the same process of growth, and as the UN Commission for Social Development put it:

> 'with sufficient insight and imagination they can be related in such a way that one strengthens, sustains and reflects the other'.[1]

Finally, the very nature of the youth has made it increasingly impossible to ignore them in the development effort. Their spirit of adventure, courage, fresh ideas, idealism, initiative and enthusiasm can be effectively utilized in the process of development. This will particularly prove to be the case in developing countries where financial and other resources are very scarce.

This paper deals specifically with the Ghanaian rural youth. It begins with a discussion of two basic concepts used in this article, namely, 'youth' and 'rural'. The next section deals with the characteristics of the Ghanaian youth in relation to the general population. There is next a discussion of the government's youth policy in Ghana, with special reference to the role to be played by rural youth in the governments' action programmes. There is also a consideration of the general rural problem in Ghana, pointing out some of the urban-rural differentials in health, housing and other socio-economic amenities. This is followed by a discussion of the special problems of the rural youth vis-a-vis their urban counterparts. The final section gives some suggestions which could help improve the circumstances of the rural youth,

1 United Nations Economic and Social Council Commission for Social Development, Preliminary Report on long-term policies and Programmes for Youth in National Development, E/CN. 5/434, 7th Jan. 1969. p.11.

while at the same time mobilizing them for national development.

2. Definition of the Problem

The two concepts which are considered basic to the paper are 'rural' and 'youth'. Our attention will first turn to 'youth'. Perhaps, in a paper of this nature it will be prudent not to attempt to define the term 'youth' or to indicate the point at which a young person ceases to be a youth and enters adulthood. This is because notions of 'social maturity' are culturally based and vary from one society to another. However, in order to make a meaningful contribution to what should be the youth's role in nation building, one should at least be clear in his mind what section of a nation's population is referred to as youth. To this end, a few definitions of youth will be given.

In UN circles, the youth are those in the age-group 14-25. This is generally considered the time of life when most young people decide on their course of studies, find their first employment, choose their life partner and work out their philosophy of life (Woods, 1973, p. 7).

In contrast to the above definition, Rosenmayer (1968) analyses the concept of youth with particular reference to its sociological connotation:

"The youth will be viewed as a segment of a population." (p.287). In other words, the emphasis is not on age limits. The concept is used to refer to able-bodied men and women capable of contributing their quota to the process of development.

Another definition is given by Eisenstadt (1956) who argues that the main shift in age roles that brings on adulthood occurs when the young person gains the right to establish a family of procreation (p.30) The difficulty with this definition is that it is negative and that physical maturity may be recognized, but dependencies and subordination associated with adolescence may be maintained in other role spheres.

McQueen (1968) therefore argues that

> "perhaps full social maturity of adulthoold might better be considered to occur when the young person has the capacity, because of a relatively independent economic position, to establish his own family and to maintain a social status in the community for himself and his family" (p.191).

This definition places the accent on the economic roles and social capabilities derived from them. MCQueen further suggests that those young people who have become integrated into the modern economy and who have achieved the requisite role condition that makes other aspects of adulthood possible should be referred to as 'young adults' rather than youth.

The term 'rural' like the term 'youth', does not have a universally accepted definition. Various criteria have been used to distinguish rural from urban communities. The most commonly used are: population or numerical criterion, density of population, legal limit or size, legal status, predominant occupations, and social organization, such as mobility, differentiation and stratification. Aside from the differences in the above-mentioned characteristics, rural and urban communities are considered to have a distinct pattern of life, expressing itself in different attitudes and values, and in different philosophies of life.

From the above considerations, it is quite evident that it is not easy to identity the group for this discussion. However, for purposes of convenience, the Ghanaian rural youth will include all persons in the 14-25 age group whether literate of illiterate, employed or unemployed, and resident in localities with populations of less than 5,000. Admittedly, this is not a sufficient definition but it will at least help identify the group we shall be referring to in this discussion.

3. The Characteristics of the Youth

In this section, the characteristics of the youth as whole in relation to the general Ghanaian population will be considered. This will serve as a useful prelude to a comparison of rural and urban youth in a later section.

Ghana, like many developing countries, has a young and growing population. In 1970, 4,015,965 or 46.9% of the population, were under 15 years of age and 5,475,151 or 63.9% were under 25 years. (1970 Population Census, Vol. 11). In Table I are shown the youth in age-groups between 14 and 25 in Ghana in 1970. As indicated in the table there were 1,634,833 persons in the age group 14-24 and this consituted roughly 19% of the total population.

Table 1

YOUTH IN AGE-GROUPS BETWEEN 14 AND 24 IN GHANA, 1970

Age	No.
14	175,647
15	187,138
16	160,864
17	128,099
18	178,568
19	123,386
20	195,000
21	113,372
22	139,087
23	106,190
24	127,482
TOTAL	1,634,833

Source: Ministry of Education

Furthermore, the population growth rate is 2.4% per annum. This rapid growth rate and the type of age distribution together have a number of implications for economic development. In the first place, since about half of the population is under 15 years it means that a large proportion of scarce revenue has to be invested in items like

education, health and services which either take a long time to yield divident or have no direct bearing on economic development.

Secondly, this type of age distribution is adverse for economic development in that there is a greater demand for consumer goods rather than capital goods and this affects the rate of investment for further production.

Thirdly, the present large numbers of children also pose the problem of providing employment for them when they eventually enter the ranks of the labour force.

Fourthly, the high rate of population growth renders much more difficult the task of achieving appreciable increases in per capita consumption.

Finally, childbearing and child care reduce the number of young women who can seek employment. For example, the 1970 Population Census shows that the proportion of women in employment reaches its peak only among those in their 40s and 50s.

At this juncture it will be interesting to see what policy the Government of Ghana has for the youth of the country.

4. Youth Policy

It must be stated at the outset that there has not been a comprehensive youth policy or a well-defined policy towards youth work in the country even though successive governments have given financial support in the form of annual subventions and also the creation of various departments and ministries for youth affairs. This absence of a comprehensive youth policy, with a directing ideology, has made it very easy for continuity in youth work to be further jeopardized by the recent rapid changes of government.

At the moment, the National Youth Council (NYC) which came into being as a result of recommendations of the Committee on the Establishment of a National Youth Movement, is the central body which controls youth affairs in Ghana. The Executive Instrument, NCRD. 241, which decreed the Council into existence in 1974 states in Section 2,

Sub-section I that:

"the object of the Council is to develop a strong and disciplined youth imbued with a spirit of nationalism and a sense of national services and morality".

The Council is further charged to pursue and formulate policies and programmes as

"will promote in the youth:-

a) a sense of self-reliance, leadership, discipline and civic responsibility;

b) a sense of friendship and cooperation through exchange of ideas with youth organizations in other countries in Africa and the world".

Two Ministries have been given the task of training the youth for their future roles, namely:

a) The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports charged with the responsibility of developing the youth in educational institutions and

b) The Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Cooperatives which is responsible for catering for the needs of both the organized and 'unattached' youth who are outside the educational institutions.

At the moment there are over 20 national youth organizations in Ghana, which are members of the NYC. These include the Uniformed organizations (Boy Scouts, Girl Guides); Educational and service organizations (Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association); Rural organizations (Young Farmers' Clubs, Catholic Rural Youth); Student organizations (Ghana National Union of Students); and the Church-related groups. In addition, there are numerous Youth associations which have been formed in the villages for development purposes. There are also a number of linguistic groups like the Ga Youth Association and the Ashanti Youth Association, not to mention the many local sports groups and a number of local cultural groups.

The majority of youth movements in Ghana are primarily educational movements, and have made a good contribution to citizenship education. To date, their leadership has tended to have a more social-humanitarian religious character. It also appears that the work of the national youth organizations is far too concentrated in the cities with the already privileged school youth. The rural, uneducated and the unemployed youth have largely been neglected. Woods(1973) for example has noted that there is no national network of cooperation for all rural youth work. Table 2 indicates that the existing organized youth groups do not appeal to the uneducated youth, with the result that their membership is largely drawn from their educated counterparts. As illustrated in the table only about 0.7% of the members of four youth organizations in Accra had not had any form of formal education, with the great majority of them (86.0%) having attained either the Middle School or Secondary School level of education.

TABLE 2

EDUCATIONAL STATUS AND MEMBERSHIP OF YOUTH ORGANISATION

Level of Education	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Middle School	137	42.8	108	50.5	245	45.9
Commercial	8	2.5	17	7.9	25	4.7
Secondary	136	42.5	78	36.4	214	40.1
Tech./Vocational	25	7.9	1	0.5	26	4.9
Training College	8	2.5	7	3.3	15	2.8
University	3	0.9	2	0.9	5	0.9
No Education	3	0.9	1	0.5	4	0.7
TOTAL	320	100.0	214	100.0	534	100.0

Source: Nortey?

5. Rural-Urban Differentials[2]

A country's problems are also those of the youth, and the needs of the youth are so interrelated to the needs of the community that the needs of the former can only be met when the needs of the whole country are met. This section of the paper will therefore compare the general circumstances of the rural vis-a-vis the urban population, bringing out some of the urban-rural differentials in health, housing and other socio-economic amenities in the country as a whole.

Ghana is predominantly an agricultural and rural country. It is estimated that the proportion of the employed population engaged in agriculture is 57.2% and about 71.1% of the population live in rural areas which consist of about 80% of the land mass of the country. As many as 48% of the total population still live in villages of less than 1,000 inhabitants. Inspite of the fact that the great majority of people live in the rural areas, over the years, these areas have received less than their fair share, vis-a-vis the urban areas - of the attention and resources devoted to development in Ghana. As a result of this neglect the living conditions of the rural folk are, to say the least, unattractive and depressing, and life in the rural areas can aptly be described in the Hobbesian terminology, as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short".

In the medical field, there is a great concentration of medical services, facilities and personnel in the towns and large villages. In 1970, for example, the 9 regional capitals had 87 (55.6%) out of the 157 hospitals in Ghana even though they accounted for only 1,320,000 (15%) of the total population of Ghana. The three cities of Accra-Tema, Sekondi Takoradi and Kumasi between them had 75% of all the hospitals in the 9 regional capitals with Accra-Tema alone having 57 hospitals.

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[2] This section of the paper has drawn greatly on the material used in a previous article "Strategies of Rural Development in Ghana", Universitas, Vol. 4, No.1, November 1974. pp. 109-129.

The same disparity is seen in the distribution of medical personnel in the rural and urban areas. Table 3, for example, shows the distribution of doctors and dentists by regions as at 31st December, 1973. It could be seen for example that the Greater Accra Region which has only 9.8% of Ghana's total population has about 44.7% of all doctors and dentists in Ghana. The situation is aggravated by the fact that even in the regions most of the health personnel and facilities are concentrated in the bigger towns and urban centres whereas the rural areas can boast of only a few health centres, health posts and medical field units.

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF DOCTORS AND DENTISTS BY REGIONS AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1973

Region	Public		Private		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Greater Accra	267	47.16	56	35.66	323	44.77
Western	58	10.25	17	10.83	75	10.37
Central	30	5.30	12	7.64	42	5.80
Eastern	37	6.54	11	7.01	48	6.64
Volta	32	5.65	10	6.37	42	5.80
Ashanti	80	14.14	40	25.48	120	16.60
Brong-Ahafo	22	3.89	8	5.10	30	4.15
Northern	24	4.24	2	1.27	26	3.60
Upper	16	2.83	1	0.64	17	2.34
TOTAL	566	100.0	157	100.0	723	100.0

Source: Ministry of Health.

The net adverse effect of this urban concentration of medical facilities and personnel can be seen on the crude death rate, infant mortality rate and the life expectancy at birth of the rural population.

The crude death rate in the late 1960s was estimated to be between 19 and 20 per thousand population. However, as can be seen in table 4, the urban death rate (14 per thousand) is about two-thirds that of the rural death rate of 21.1. with Accra Capital District recording between 8-10 per thousand persons (Gaisie, 1974, p.13).

TABLE 4

ESTIMATED CRUDE DEATH RATES BY REGION AND RESIDENCE
(1968–1969)

Region	Urban + Rural	Urban	Rural
All regions	19 – 20	14.0	21.1
Accra Capital Dis.	8 – 10	7.4	14.5
Eastern	17 – 20	17.7	20.2
Central	19 – 20	17.0	21.3
Western	15 – 17	12.0	22.3
Volta	18 – 19	16.5	20.4
Ashanti	18 – 19	12.5	20.0
Brong-Ahafo	19 – 20	16.3	22.0
Northern	24 – 25	15.6	29.4
Upper	26 – 27	15.1	19.5

Source: S.K. Gaisie – Determinants of Population Growth in Ghana Ph.D Thesis. Australia National Univ. Canberra, 1973.

Similarly, the infant mortality rate was estimated in the mid-1960s to be 133 per thousand live births. But again the urban rate of 98 per thousand live births is lower than the rural rate of 148 per thousand live births. (Gaisie, 1973, p. 298). Table 5 gives the estimated life expectancy at brith by sex, region and residence in 1968–69. It can be seen that the expectation of life at birth is generally higher in the urban than in the rural areas. Writing a summary on the urban-rural mortality differential,

TABLE 5

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH BY SEX, REGION AND RESIDENCE
(1968-69)

Region	Urban + Rural		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All regions	45.6	48.3	54.1	57.7	40.4	44.7
Accra Cap. Dist.	63.4	65.7	-	-	-	-
Eastern	45.2	50.3	-	-	-	-
Central	42.3	45.7	-	-	-	-
Western	42.9	46.3	-	-	-	-
Volta	52.4	56.4	-	-	-	-
Ashanti	50.2	53.9	-	-	-	-
Brong-Ahafo	44.6	49.2	-	-	-	-
Northern	35.9	38.7	-	-	-	-
Upper	34.3	38.3	-	-	-	-

Source: S.K. Gaisie - Determinants of Population Growth in Ghana, Ph.D. Thesis, Australian National Univ. Canberra, 1973.

Gaisie (1974) aptly notes:

"Mortality is higher in the rural than in the urban areas, the urban life expectancy at birth exceeds that of the rural communities by between 12 and 13 years. The available figures suggest substantial urban-rural differentials within the various regions, and though the magnitude of these differences cannot be precisely determined in the light of the available data, they are indicative of the prevailing better health conditions in the cities and towns where most of the medical and health facilities are concentrated". (Ibid, p. 16).

With regard to housing it can be said that the construction of houses in Ghana has lagged behind the demand for it by all income and social class levels. It is, however, evident that the housing problem

is particularly acute in urban ghettos and in low-income rural areas (Brown, 1974a, p.8). Most of the houses in the rural areas still lack one or a combination of the basic amenities such as good drinking water, electricity, kitchen and toilets. Let us take water and electricity as typical examples.

As indicated in Table 6 below, only 2,619,703 (30.6%) of Ghana's total population of 8.5 million had access to pipe-borne water in 1970. Of this number 2,032,451 (77.6%) could be found in urban areas as compared to only 587,252 (22.4%) in the rural areas. Of those who had access to potable water in 1970, about 1,474,000 (56.3%) could be located in the 9 regional capitals. The three cities of Accra-Tema, Sekondi-Takoradi and Kumasi together had 1,207,000 (46.1%) of those served with pipe-borne water. In Greater Accra, for example, 89.2% of the population had access to pipe-borne water whereas in the Upper Region only 10.5% of the population enjoyed this facility.

TABLE 6

ESTIMATED POPULATION USING PIPE-BORNE WATER BY REGION AND RESIDENCE IN 1970

Region	The Population who use Pipe-borne water		Rural-Urban Distribution of population who use pipe-borne water	
	No.	As percentage of population in region	Urban %	Rural %
All regions	2,619,703	30.6	77.6	22.4
Greater Accra	759,852	89.2	95.0	5.0
Western	254,013	33.0	61.3	38.7
Central	284,511	32.0	68.5	31.5
Eastern	295,095	23.4	70.6	29.4
Volta	161,176	17.0	42.6	57.4
Ashanti	469,287	31.7	80.7	19.3
Brong-Ahafo	140,660	18.4	73.4	26.6
Northern	164,220	22.6	85.4	14.6
Upper	90,889	10.5	67.0	33.0

Source: 1970 Population Census: Special Report 'D'.

In the distribution of electricity again a great disparity is seen between the urban and rural areas. In 1970, only 1,772,000 (20.7%) of the total population of Ghana had access to electricity supply, and the bulk of the electricity supply went to the urban residents. For example, the three dominant cities of Accra-Tema Sekondi-Takoradi and Kumasi alone accounted for 58% of the total number that had access to electricity supply (Kudiabor, 1974, p.2).

6. The Problems of the Rural Youth

There is no doubt that if the Ghanaian rural youth are asked to enumerate their personal problems a pot pourri of problems will be mentioned. The present writer has, however, selected for discussion only a few of these problems which he considers to be crucial to the majority of the rural youth. The problems to be considered are:- organization, education, employment and migration.

As has already been mentioned in an earlier section of the paper, the Ghanaian rural youth are not properly organized. At the moment there is no national network of cooperation for all rural youth work. The work of the national youth organization is far too concentrated in the cities and big towns with the inevitable result that the rural youth - educated and uneducated alike-have been neglected. Infact, apart from the Young Farmers' Clubs, the Catholic Rural Youth and some national youth organizations[3] which carry on activities in the rural areas, the rural youth have largely been left on their own.

Education in the rural areas of Ghana is often poor and inadequate. The provisional results of the 1970 Population Census indicate that 797,917 or 37.5% of those in the 'compulsory' school age group of 6-14 years have never been to school.

3 These include the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) which engages in cooperative farming; The Young Meh's Christian Association (YMCA) which has a Rural Training Center at Kpone; and The Ghana National Youth Council (GNYC) which runs a rural course at the Youth Leadership Training Institute and operates farm settlements.

As shown in Table 7, 81.4% of this group are to be found in the rural areas. The corresponding figures for males and females are 84.4% and 78.9% respectively.

TABLE 7

COMPULSORY SCHOOL GOING AGE 6 – 14 WHO HAVE NEVER BEEN TO SCHOOL BY SEX AND RESIDENCE

Residence	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Urban	56,277	15.6	92,175	21.1	148,452	18.6
Rural	305,049	84.4	344,416	78.9	649,465	81.4
Total	361,326	100.0	436,591	100.0	797,917	100.0

Source: Provisional Results, 1970 Population Census.

Some of the factors which have contributed to the general low level of education and the low level of school attendance are the paucity of schools, the lack of trained teachers in some of these schools, the lack of transport facilities, the inability to pay textbooks fees, the care for younger children, and the utilization of children in agricultural work, which has been made possible by the Labour Decree of 1967(N.L.C.D. No. 157) which states, inter alia:

> "No person shall employ a child except where the employment is with the child's own family and involves light work of an agricultural or domestic character only."

From the above discussion it appears that the rural youth vis-a-vis their urban counterparts have a relatively high proportion of the illiterate youth in Ghana. It therefore follows that a substantial number of the rural youth will have to be trained outside the precints of formal institutions if they are to make a meaningful contribution to national development. Various apprenticeship schemes and on-the-job and in-plant training will therefore have to be devised for them. This leads us to the thorny question of youth employment.

There is a dearth of overall statistics on youth unemployment in general and on rural youth in particular. What information exists can be gleaned from individual studies and reports.

Unemployment is generally considered to be the number one youth problem in Ghana today. Woods (1973) estimates that about 45,000 middle school leavers hit the labour market each year. She further shows that between 1967 and 1971, a yearly average of 105,775 young persons (16–18) applied for jobs through the Public Employment Centres. During this period, the yearly average of those who were placed was 10,130. After taking account of those who were found jobs and those who, for one reason or another, failed to renew their applications for employment after the expiration of the prescribed period within which applications were considered live, a yearly average of 59,590 (monthly average of 4,966) youth were actively looking for employment during the 5-year period 1967–71. The monthly average of placement was rately over 1,000. This means that one young job seeker out of five was placed. This has been summarized in Table 8 below.

TABLE 8

JOB PLACEMENTS AT THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IN GHANA
(16–18 years)

	Total	Average	Total	Average	Total	Average
	1967		1968		1969	
Registration	96,727	8,061	116,380	9,697	105,206	8,767
Placement	7,202	600	9,214	768	10,782	899
Seeking Jobs	56,213	4,684	68,194	5,683	58,812	4,901
	1970		1971		1967–1971	
Registration	101,028	8,419	109,556	9,130	528,877	105,775
Placement	10,792	899	12,659	1,055	50,649	10,130
Seeking Jobs	52,980	4,415	61,750	5,146	297,949	59,590

Source: Department of Labour, Ghana.

Other studies have also indicated the extent of youth unemployment in Ghana. In the Madina Survey, for example, Quarcoo et al (1967) found that the majority of those unemployed were found to be in the age group 15-24. An estimated 62.8% of unemployed males and 71% of unemployed females were in the age group of adolescence and young adults, most of whom had migrated from the rural areas to Madina, a suburb about 9 miles from Accra.

It has been established that in Ghana it is predominantly the educated youth, especially those between 15 and 29 years of age, who migrate to the towns, and for most of them the prime motive for migration is the need and desire for job opportunities and higher and regular monthly income. It thus appears that any programme purported to help the rural youth should provide employment opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed in the rural areas. This will not only help stem the flow of rural youth into the big towns but also raise their incomes and increase their purchasing power.

The case of the illiterate rural youth vis-a-vis their literate[4] counterparts is even more pathetic. Because the former feel left out in the decisions made by the literates, they are often apathetic when it comes to the implementation of these decisions (Gillette, 1973).

Furthermore, because the illiterate rural youth have little or no qualifications, they may hold only unskilled and semiskilled jobs that would be difficult to replace in a tight job market should they ever lose them. In their status as 'last-hired and first-fired' the illiterate rural youth have a very precarious position in the modern economy and thus hold dubious prospects for stable careers. The result is often that they are prepared to accept anything by way of employment which will barely

4 I am here using the 1962 UNESCO definition of literacy which states: "A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group or community, and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development". This is the selective, functional and work-oriented approach to literacy.

keep body and soul together. The illiterate rural youth are what McQueen (1968) calls 'marginal transitional youth' who as he puts it:

> "are in the least favourable position and may be expected to be enveloped in continuing distress and crisis situations as they wrestle with their problems, largely alone and in psychological and perhaps physical isolation from a stabilizing socio-cultural context. These are truly uprooted youth who have only the most tenuous relationship to the established institutions of society" (Ibid, p.191)

Now what are some of the possible behavioural outcomes for the rural youth under such trying circumstances? McQueen (1968) has divided these outcomes into:

a) Political and b) Criminal

He argues that different perpectives on the possibilities of the situation may lead some youths toward political radicalism and others toward conservative politics, while still others may eschew politics altogether. This last group of youth will be predisposed to seek change in the existing social structure. The frequent events of youth demonstrations, manifestoes, sit-ins and sometimes violent protests in many developing countries are all veritable signs of the need for change in the existing social structure.

Secondly, crime may have a considerable appeal to the disgruntled rural youth in the form of immediate material and psychic rewards. They may be strongly disposed to commit functional crimes to meet their subsistence needs, at the same time indulging in illegal and unconventional practices which are functional for gaining education and work. As has been pointed out by UNESCO (1972), drug-taking, delinquency and neurosis are the escape routes when the youth feel that they no longer hold their destinies in their hands and that all paths of advancement are closed to them.

7. Towards An Action Programme

It might appear from the foregoing discussion that the present writer is a prophet of doom who sees the Ghanaian rural youth as a parasite on the rest of the population. On the contrary, it is his

conviction that the rural youth can be mobilized for national development if the proper decisions and actions are taken. In fact, he sees the role of the Ghanaian rural youth "not only as assets for development but also as agents for and instigators of social change, with due regard to the conviction that traditional values and patterns of social behaviour need to be changed drastically and radically so as to provide the basic needs of human life and to renovate and improve the quality of life in a meaningful way" (UNCESI, 1972). This section of the paper therefore discusses an action programme which might not only make the rural youth useful members of the Ghanaian society but also improve the quality of life of every individual member of the community.

1 Policy

In the first place, for the youth to make a meaningful contribution to the national development effort, it will be valuable to have a comprehensive youth policy in Ghana. At the present stage of the country's development, the main aim of such a policy should be to prepare the youth to take a role in national development and to give them opportunities to do so.

Secondly, such a policy should make the youth aware of the nation's problems, channel their high aspirations and youthful enthusiasm for building up the economy, while at the same time providing facilities for the training of new leadership.

Furthermore, as Amoa (1970) has rightly pointed out, in a developing country like Ghana, the success of a youth policy will depend on three main factors, namely:

a) The basis of the policy,

b) The programme and organizational aspect,

and c) The implementation of the policy.

With regard to the basis of youth policy, there should be a mechanism for creating consciousness, a sense of identity and the willingness for one to work or do something for one's country. In this connection, it will be appropriate to evolve a policy which will not necessarily change with a change of Government, but which will embrace all the different

youth groups and shades of opinion in the country.

Secondly, for the youth programme to be effective, it should be comprehensive enough to cover all the different categories of youth in the country. As has already been pointed out, most of the youth groups in the country have, to date, been run by urban - educated elites. The result has been that the needs and requirements of the rural youth who constitute the great majority of the youth of the country, have not been fully investigated and understood. It is therefore being advocated that greater attention should be paid to the rural youth, both literate and illiterate, employed and unemployed. There is no doubt that if this group is effectively mobilized it could draw the majority of the youth into taking active interest in youth movements.

Besides the importance of getting financial support, skilled personnel, proper organizational support, and cooperation of all administrative departments, there are certain factors which should be seriously considered if the youth programme is to be successfully implemented. These include:

a) Security mechanisms for the youth such as incentives.
b) Effective leadership as a source of inspiration for the youth.
c) The participants' conviction of the usefulness of what they are doing, and
d) Community support for the programme.

It is hoped that these four factors will together be a stimulating force for the successful implementation of youth programmes.

2 Employment

The major causes of youth unrest in the modern world have been found to be widespread existing unemployment and poor prospects for the future in developing countries and economic uncertainty in the industrialized nations (IIEE Bulletin, 30th Sept. 1974). Also, as has already been pointed out, unemployment is regarded as the major problem of the youth in Ghana. The crucial question to ask at this juncture is:
"What should be done to combat the problem of youth unemployment?"

Admittedly, there have been various attempts in Ghana to combat the problem of rural youth unemployment. Many of the institutions currently operating in the rural sector date back to the efforts of the Nkrumah Government to create employment in the public sector. During the Nkrumah regime, the Workers' Brigade, The Young Farmers' League and The Young Pioneers engaged large numbers of young people in public works and development projects, and some skills training was obtained in the process. The Brigade, for example, was established in 1957, inter alia,

i) to absorb and mobilize the unemployed (eg school leavers) for capital construction and other projects in the rural areas,

ii) to establish training schemes for various trades, and

iii) to undertake industrial projects.[5] Similarly, the Young Farmers' League was:

i) to establish socialist settlement schemes for middle school leavers as well as uneducated youth,

ii) to develop cottage industries on the farms, and

iii) to instruct its members in the party's socialist programme.[6]

The progress Party Government set up the National Service Corps on a modest scale to employ school leavers in socio-economic development; training centres for rural craft were also established. In addition, by combining the roles of the youth and rural development under one portfolio, the P.P. Government sought to demonstrate that the problem of rural development was, par excellence, the problem of youth (Brown, 1975). During this period, the main concern of the Ministry of Rural Development and Social Welfare, was "to see to it that the phenomenon of exodus of youth

5 Ghana: Report of Commission Appointed to Enquire into the functions, Operation and Administration of the Workers' Brigade; Minority Report; and White Paper thereon, Accra, Government Printer, 1969.

6 Young Farmers' League Constitutions, Aims and Objectives. Accra, Bureau of African Affairs, 1965.

from the rural areas to the urban areas in search of white collar jobs which hardly exist and are in any case unsuitable for them and for the health of the nation , be reversed.[7]

The present Supreme Military Council (SMC) Government has also given some thought to the thorny question of youth unemployment in the rural sector. As one of the basic elements of an employment-oriented development strategy, the Government intends to provide employment and training opportunity for the youth, particularly school leavers in the age group 15-19, who have not been able to secure any productive employment.

"Government will consider the possibility of mobilizing and harnessing the creative potentialities, resourcefulness and energies of the youth in this age group, under an appropriate organization, for useful employment and training in these fields. A special aspect of this programme will be to lay stress on vocational and apprenticeship training in such skills and professions as would equip the beneficiaries for ready employment".[8]

At the present, it appears that governmental efforts are focussed mainly on farm settlements. It is therefore being suggested that these farm settlements could be turned into training centres as well as production centres in order to provide knowledge of modern agricultural methods to the young settlers. As has also been suggested by Woods(1973) the second step could be to expand the number of these training and production sites at a steady rate as has been the case with the training camps of the Young Pioneers in Malawi. If necessary, the support of the ILO in terms of personnel and finance could be solicited.

It is being further suggested that non-governmental organizations should be greatly encouraged in their efforts to provide small-scale projects for training and job creation. In addition, voluntary organizations can play a vital role in vocational guidance to be provided in the schools to show the young people the various possibilities open to them

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7 Ghana: Official Handbook, Public Relations Department, Accra, 1971 pp. 201-202.

8 Guidelines for the 5-year Development Plan, (1975-1980) Jan. 1975, Ghana Publishing Corporation, Accra-Tema, Ghana, p. 33.

in their particular field of endeavour. These organizations can, for example, inform the youth about the employment market through lectures in the schools, increase their contact with people in various professions and occupations, and encourage visits to work places so as to give a more realistic turn to youth's vocational aspirations.

It must be conceded that at the moment there are various schemes for presenting scientific agriculture and other occupations to school leavers in the rural areas. These include: The Young Farmers Clubs which encourage the youth to take on projects for crop-raising and animal rearing; farm extension programme of the Ministry of Agriculture which serves younger people on their family farms as well as young farmers striking out on their own; farm institutes and training centres which offer one-year courses for middle school leavers; practical courses at the Youth Leadership Training Institute at Afienya which sponsors a 9-month course in the areas of small-scale farming, fishing, livestock, machine repair and carpentry; and the Rural Rehabilitation Unit of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development which aims to prepare the handicapped for selfemployment in leather work, seagrass weaving, farming, poultry keeping, shoemaking and tailoring. However, the fact that unemployment is still regarded as the major problem facing the rural youth shows that the existing schemes and institutional arrangements have failed to satisfy the aspirations of the youth. Greater effort is therefore needed in this regard. The central government, trade unions, youth organizations and private institutions should all initiate stronger measures to create employment opportunities in the rural areas. In addition, training programmes of vocational training in agriculture should bring employment opportunities in connected enterprises for rural youth. Given the youth's well-known aversion to subsistence farming in Ghana, the present writer has suggested elsewhere that it will be better to shift emphasis on to cash crop production in the rural areas and plan for the employment of an increasing porportion in non-agricultural activities (Brown, 1974b, p. 124).

3 Education

The next question which naturally comes after a discussion of youth employment is that of education. This is because it is generally assumed that it is what the educational system has been able to impart to the youth which later on determines their future roles in society.

It is sad to note that for many years public education in Ghana was not oriented to productive employment. As Maheu (1973) has aptly put it.

> "the absence of a link between education and employment has led to the under-employment of graduates, the prohibitive cost of one sector benefiting only a fraction of the population and the internal inefficiency leading to a growing number of young school leavers without qualifications".

The emphasis is, however, now shifting from the general type of education to one which is employment - oriented. One of the major objectives of the educational policy stated in the Guidelines for the 5 - year Development Plan is:

> "to reform the structure and content of general education so as to make it not only employment - oriented, but also imbue the youth of this nation with a sense of revolutionary discipline and national pride". (Ibid., p 26)

With regard to Primary and Middle School education, The Guidelines specifically states:

> "Government will diversify the curriculum with a view to making the pupils more employable when they enter the labour market. Government will also expand and diversify the content of the continuation schools is classes M.3 and M.4 so as to render their products easily employable". (Ibid., p. 29)

Furthermore, at the International Labour Conference, in 1972 the then Commissioner for Labour, Social Welfare and Cooperatives indicated that:

> 'High priority will be accorded to programmes for the training of young men in skills that are designed to improve their prospects of employment. In this connection, the different kinds of vocational training, and apprenticeship schemes currently sponsored by various authorities in Ghana will be intensified and expanded'[9]

The above-mentioned moves and references are all in the right direction. In fact, the writer supports the idea that the expansion and reorientation of educational opportunities should continue until every youth enjoys the right to some form of life-long education. This is indeed the time for out-of-school education, for which considerable infrastructure already exists in Ghana, to be recognized as an integral part of life-long education. This will prove to be very beneficial to the rural youth a substantial number of whom will have to be trained outside the precints of formal institutions.

The type of education being advocated here should embody the following ingredients:

(1) It should be geared toward meeting the demand for education among the unschooled masses
(2) It should offer more direct economic returns sooner than later
(3) Its contents should be adapted to local needs
(4) It should use more attractive and effective pedagogy, and
(5) It should lay the foundation for continuing or life-long education while providing functional adult education.

It is sad to remark that at present the Ministry of Education accepts little responsibility for the out-of-school sector of education. Even if it does not have the human and material resources to undertake such a scheme, the Ministry can at least assume the responsibility for coordinating the work of the various governmental and non-governmental organizations in this field.

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9 International Labour Conference, PROVISIONAL RECORD, 57th Session, Geneva, ILO, 1972.

4 Migration

The major consequence of the disparity in the conditions of living in the rural and urban areas is rural-urban migration. It is pointless to talk about the rural youth remaining in the countryside when facilities of health, housing, education, employment and amusement are better developed and provided in the urban areas; that is, when the town is, in the language of the youth, "where the action is". One way of stemming the flow of rural-urban migration of the youth will be to provide in the country-side whatever attracts them into the towns. This means correcting the urban-rural imbalance in health, housing, education, employment and amusement, at the same time providing other services and amenities, which have hitherto been lacking in the rural areas.

Furthermore, following the example of Mali, the Government can create a number of rural activiation centres, where village boys would come to learn a variety of skills that are taught in such a way as to be of immediate and practical use. The basic aim of the establishment of these centres should be to encourage the rural youth to stay in their villages to become agents of change and improvement, both in agriculture and in community life.

To conclude this section it is hoped that with the type of education and training advocated here, coupled with the provision of adequate job opportunities, the further provision of the basic social amenities and services in the rural areas will make it unnecessary for the rural youth to want to migrate to the urban areas.

8 Conclusion

It is pertinent at this stage to ask whether the Ghanaian rural youth, as they are now, can be considered as either a resource or a burden on the scarce resources of the country. In order to give a satisfactory answer, it will be necessary to review the relevant evidence adduced in this paper.

It has been shown that to date the rural youth have basically been neglected by various youth movements and organizations who have tended to concentrate their activities in the cities and large towns. It was further shown that membership of these organizations has largely been drawn from the educated youth with the result that the rural youth who constitute about 81.4% of the uneducated youth in Ghana have hardly been appealed to.

Secondly, evidence has been adduced to show that the living conditions of the rural youth vis-a-vis their urban counterparts have been, to say the least, unattractive and depressing. They have lived in an atmosphere of insecurity, poverty, disease and ignorance.

With regard to education of the rural youth, it was shown that generally education in the rural areas was often poor and inadequate. Some of the factors which have contributed to the low level of school attendance and the general low level of education in the rural areas were shown to include, the paucity of schools, the lack of trained teachers, prohibitive textbook fees, the care for younger children and the utilization of children in agricultural work.

Finally, the pathetic case of the illiterate rural youth who feel alienated and left out in both the formulation and implementation of decisions made by their literate counterparts has been described. From the evidence adduced, it looks as if the Ghanaian rural youth have hitherto been given a raw deal by their society. They have literally been given a bad cheque which has bounced back on society. They have not been able to make a meaningful contribution to national development from their huge reservoir largely because society has so far not thought it necessary. The onus therefore lies on society to make the rural youth play a distinctive role in the economic growth and social evolution of the country. It might therefore be concluded that whether the Ghanaian rural youth will in future be seen as either a resource or burden will depend on what role the Ghanaian society will want them to play in the development effort.

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